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ABSTRACT

There appears to have been no coherent movement of rural adult education in the United States since the area was first surveyed in the 1930s. Such problems exist as fragmentation, a lack of communication across efforts, and a lack of continuity in time. There does not even appear to be adequate information on the nature and scope of the enterprise in the rural area. None of the state surveys reviewed distinguished rural from urban participants of individual communities or counties. Few of the surveys took into account, in any systematic way, learner-initiated individual study or informal learning networks among individuals. Few of the programs described in the literature have tried seriously to discover and work within local folk traditions of communication, education, or even local perceptions of the problems involved. Research needs in several areas are apparent: (1) better inventory of current participation; (2) generalizations about what works and under what conditions; (3) methods appropriate to people with limited literacy; (4) maximizing the resources already present; and (5) ways to incorporate these needs into programs in such a way that the programs belong to the people they serve. (CT)

Information Series No. 173

ADULT EDUCATION FOR RURAL AMERICANS: AN INTRODUCTORY REVIEW

written by

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1979

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FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/CE) is one of sixteen clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the National Institute of Education. One of the functions of the Clearinghouse is to interpret the literature that is entered in the ERIC data base. This paper should be of particular interest to those seeking a broad, general overview of adult education in rural America.

The profession is indebted to Robert L. Bruce for his scholarship in the preparation of this paper. Recognition also is due Russel C. Wilson, Auburn University; Jerry Parsons, Kansas State University; and Karin Stork-Whitson, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, for their critical review of the manuscript prior to final revision and publication. Robert D. Bhaerman, Assistant Director for Career Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, coordinated the publication's development. Cathy Thompson assisted in the editing of the manuscript, and Cathy Kendall typed the final draft.

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ABSTRACT

There appears to have been no coherent movement of rural adult education in the United States since the area was first surveyed in the 1930s. Such problems exist as fragmentation, a lack of communication across efforts, and a lack of continuity in time. There does not even appear to be adequate information on the nature and scope of the enterprise in the rural area. None of the state surveys reviewed distinguished rural from urban participants of individual communities or counties. Few of the surveys took into account, in any systematic way, learner-initiated individual study or informal learning networks among individuals. Few of the programs described in the literature have tried seriously to discover and work within local folk traditions of communication, education, or even local perceptions of the problems involved. Research needs in several areas are apparent: (1) better inventory of current participation; (2) generalizations about what works and under what conditions; (3) methods appropriate to people with limited literacy; (4) maximizing the resources already present; and (5) ways to incorporate these needs into programs in such a way that the programs belong to the people they serve. (CT)

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SOME INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

Recently I revisited the small rural community in Nebraska where I grew up. The experience constituted an excellent orientation to the topic of this paper.

One of the farmhouses in which I lived as a teen-ager is no longer standing. The windmill is still there, along with the remnants of a granary and a few trees. But the site is otherwise bare. The school stands empty in the middle of a field. At least a half-dozen farm homes within a radius of three miles are either abandoned or vanished. The children of the remaining families attend school in town.

In contrast, the house in a nearby community in which I lived until the age of ten has been replaced by another. The one-room school still is in operation. The other farmhouses in the neighborhood are -- with one exception -- occupied, although not everyone living in them is a farmer.

The two communities lie next to each other; the schools are less than six miles apart. Each community, in its way, characterizes some of the things that have been happening to the lives of rural Americans.

Rural America has never been static. The remains of stone walls in the middle of New England forests are testimonials to the fact that change is not new. From the early 1900s to the present, an increasingly sophisticated agricultural technology has made it possible for farmers to till more land. Constantly narrowing profit margins have made it necessary for them to do so. The population thus released -- or displaced -- either went on to new land or provided

unskilled labor for a developing industrial society.

Over the same period, the rural population has become increasingly mobile and differentiated. Better roads, canals, railroads, automobiles, and airplanes have made it possible for rural people to travel further and see more. Better communications, reliable mail service, telegraph, telephone, radio, and TV also have contributed to this process. Finally, the improved quality and increased investment in education have brought better teachers, better schools, and increased educational opportunity.

It has become common to think of rural America in the terms Theodore Sorenson used to describe the Nebraska of the 1960s: a place to come from or a place to die. During the years immediately following World War II, the population of many rural communities consisted mainly of those who had not gone yet or for whom no other opportunities existed. This no longer is true everywhere. The roads that brought new ideas and products into the countryside and lured people out now make it possible for people to live in the country and work somewhere else. Lifelong rural residents with rural background, education, and values have found new employment opportunities in town. Increasingly, they live and work alongside lifelong urbanites with urban values. In short, new residential opportunities exist in the countryside.

I was a farm child attending one-room schools which I reached either on horseback or in a Model A Ford. It would be hard to find a better example of the myth of rural education. This myth -- based in part on fond reminiscence, the poetry of James Whitcomb Riley, and the paintings of Grandma Moses -- continues to color our thinking on the subject.

But there is more to the picture than that. My parents also were learners. They used the library and read newspapers and magazines. They and other adults attended the PTA, extension meetings, and classes at the high school in town.

They and their successors do many of the same things today. Education in rural America never has been

confined to children or to schools. It always has involved adults; it always has made use of a variety of delivery channels.

Of course, not everyone has participated equally. The opportunities for education and the inclination to take advantage of them have varied widely from place to place and from group to group.

This brief review of the literature is an attempt to pull together some of the available information about the nature and scope of adult education in the rural area.

The study began with a search of the material available in the ERIC system. Using a careful search strategy, I uncovered a mass of material, which actually was too great to permit any sort of in-depth cataloging of current practices or to permit more than a simple synthesis.

What emerged from a study of the materials was several basic concerns around which the remainder of the paper is organized. Within each area, representative materials have been selected and discussed in order to illustrate particular points.

The problem with this approach is obvious. The issues selected will not be equally important to everyone. Only a small part of the material can be reported in the space available. The selection of issues is such that some of the most effective continuing programs -- such as Cooperative Extension, occupational education, and university extension -- receive only passing attention. These limitations have been accepted in order to identify and focus upon some of the critical problems and broad informational needs.

SOME BASIC FIGURES

One basic fact that cannot be overlooked in considering the education of rural adults is that the level of formal education is increasing. However, as of the 1970 decennial census, this level was increasing at a slower

rate than in urban areas.

The median years of school completed by all rural non-farm males past the age of twenty-five in 1940 was 8.2. By 1970, this had risen to 10.8. The figures for rural farm males during the same period rose from 7.6 to 9.7 years. Their urban counterparts, meanwhile, rose from 8.6 to 12.2.

For females, the situation is slightly different. Rural non-farm females twenty-five years and older increased the number of median school years completed from 8.5 to 11.4. The figures for urban females increased from 8.8 to 12.1. Rural farm females, who had a median completion rate of 7.4 years in 1940, had the largest increase, rising to 11.6. Nevertheless, this still was a half-year less schooling than their urban counterparts.

The differential between urban and rural schooling indicates some promise of being reduced in the future. The 1970 census indicated that the median school years completed by 20-24 year olds in the rural population was 12.4 for non-farm residents, 12.5 for farm residents, 12.7 for urban females, and 12.8 for urban males.

As everyone is aware, the overall population of the nation has become more urban over the past four decades. The rural population twenty-five years or older in 1940 was approximately 29.5 million people. In 1970 it was approximately 28.9 million. Meanwhile, the adult urban population rose from 45.2 million in 1940 to a little over 81 million in 1970. While a shifting distinction between what was counted as urban and rural contributed to this relationship, the fact remains that the rural population as a whole remained stable and the proportion of farmers in that population decreased considerably.

Overall, the current picture regarding formal schooling reflects a rural adult population approaching the level found in urban areas. However, despite the increases in median educational level, there were more than 700,000 adults in rural America in 1970 who had never attended school. In addition, another three million had less than five years of schooling. This pool of adults was described by Bishop, et al. (1967) as the product of an educational system that has historically "shortchanged" rural people.

SOME STATISTICS ON PARTICIPATION

Probably the most definitive study of participation in adult education programs in the United States was conducted by Okes (1974). The study involved all persons seventeen years of age and older who were not enrolled as full-time students and who had enrolled in organized instruction during 1969. The eligible population was 119.6 million people, of whom 13 million participated in one or more activities during the year. Of the 41.8 million adults living outside Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA), 3.8 million (9.2 percent) were participants. Participation was slightly lower among the farm population (6 percent) than among the non-farm residents (9.7 percent). The patterns of participation reflected that of the whole population, with those having less than a high school education taking part the least. (See Table 1.)

In addition, the rate of participation in the rural (outside SMSA) population was highest for white males (12.9 percent); this was followed in order by "other" females, white females, "other" males, black females, and black males. (See Table 2.) Between 40 and 45 percent of the participants in each group had enrolled in some form of occupational education during 1969, about half in vocational-technical training. Blacks were more likely than the white or "other" groups to be enrolled in general education (GED) programs. Slightly more than 40 percent of all non-SMSA black participants enrolled; this compared to slightly over a quarter of the white participants and to only 4 percent of "other" ethnic groups. Almost half of the blacks enrolled in GED were in Adult Basic Education (ABE); this was true for only one in six whites. Proportionally fewer black farm residents were in GED (28.6 percent); however, two-thirds were in ABE.

In terms of activities, community issues programs were more likely to involve farm than non-farm people, accounting for one in five white and one in three black farm participants. Black participants were half as likely as their white counterparts to be enrolled in personal and family or social/recreational programs. (See Table 3.)

Table 1: PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES: BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

CATEGORY/EDUCATION		Total (1000's)	Participants		Non-Participants	
			Number (1000's)	Percent	Number (1000's)	Percent
Total Population	Eligible	119,597	13,041	10.9	106,556	89.1
	0-11 years	52,309	1,985	3.8	50,324	96.2
	High school	42,861	5,067	11.8	37,794	88.2
	Some college	5,989	2,576	43.0	3,413	57.0
	College/post grad	12,051	3,413	28.3	8,638	71.7
Outside SMSA	Eligible	41,768	3,834	9.2	37,934	90.8
	0-11 years	21,234	752	3.5	20,482	96.5
	High school	13,851	1,530	11.3	12,321	88.7
	Some college	3,521	639	18.1	2,882	98.2
	College/post grad	4,079	908	22.2	2,263	97.8
Farm	Eligible	5,667	339	6.0	5,328	94.0
	0-11 years	3,346	75	2.2	3,271	97.8
	High school	1,782	157	8.8	1,625	91.2
	Some college	356	52	14.6	304	85.4
	College/post grad	213	58	27.2	155	72.8
Non-Farm	Eligible	35,995	3,495	9.7	32,500	90.3
	0-11 years	17,887	677	3.8	17,210	96.2
	High schools	12,049	1,353	11.2	10,696	88.8
	Some college	3,086	587	19.0	2,499	81.0
	College/post grad	2,961	853	28.8	2,108	71.2

Source: Based on Okes' *Participation in Adult Education* (1969).

Table 2: PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES: BY SEX AND RACE

CATEGORY/SEX/RACE			Total (1000's)	Participants		Non-Participants	
				Number (1000's)	Percent	Number (1000's)	Percent
Total Pop	Male	White	49,191	6,368	12.9	42,823	87.1
		Black	5,163	376	7.2	4,787	92.8
		Other	496	57	1.1	439	98.9
	Female	White	57,712	5,561	9.6	52,151	90.4
		Black	6,446	606	9.4	5,840	90.6
		Other	591	75	1.3	516	98.7
	Total		119,597	13,041	10.9	106,556	89.1
Outside SMSA	Male	White	17,848	1,961	11.0	15,887	89.0
		Black	1,467	69	4.7	1,398	95.3
		Other	137	10	7.3	127	92.7
	Female	White	20,327	1,657	8.2	18,670	91.8
		Black	1,803	115	6.4	1,688	93.6
		Other	167	14	8.4	153	91.6
	Total		41,768	3,834	9.2	37,934	90.8
Farm	Male	White	2,686	159	5.9	2,527	94.1
		Black	193	11	5.7	182	94.3
		Other	29	5	1.7	24	98.3
	Female	White	2,607	156	6.0	2,451	94.0
		Black	214	10	4.7	204	95.3
		Other	17	3	1.8	14	98.2
	Total		5,667	339	6.0	5,328	94.0
Non-Farm	Male	White	15,162	1,802	11.9	13,360	88.1
		Black	1,275	59	4.6	1,216	95.4
		Other	113	10	8.8	103	91.2
	Female	White	17,719	1,501	8.5	16,218	91.5
		Black	1,588	105	6.6	1,483	93.4
		Other	150	11	7.3	139	92.7
	Total		35,995	3,495	9.7	32,500	90.3

Source: Based on Okes' *Participation in Adult Education (1969).*

Table 3: PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION: BY ACTIVITY CATEGORIES

ACTIVITY CATEGORIES	Total Population				Non-SMSA				Farm				Non-Farm			
	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER
Total Participants (1,000)	13,041	11,920	982	131	3,814	3,626	104	25	389	322	21	4	3,495	3,304	164	21
					100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
GED ALL (1,000)	3,553	3,160	350	43	1,033	951	70	1	71	66	6	0	962	885	70	1
					26.9	26.2	41.3	4.0	20.9	20.4	28.6	0	27.5	26.8	42.7	4.8
ABE (1,000)	585	432	135	17	186	150	35	1	9	6	4	0	177	145	31	1
					4.9	4.1	19.0	4.0	2.6	1.8	19.0	0	5.1	4.4	18.9	4.8
OCC ALL (1,000) EDUCATION	5,816	5,296	462	58	1,780	1,684	87	10	145	138	6	1	1,634	1,546	81	7
					46.4	46.4	47.2	40.0	42.8	42.9	28.6	75.0	46.7	46.8	49.4	33.3
VOC-TECH (1,000)	2,951	2,628	293	30	924	862	55	5	74	71	4	0	850	794	51	5
					24.1	23.7	29.9	20.0	21.8	22.0	19.0	0	243	24.0	31.1	23.8
COMMUNITY ISSUES (1,000)	1,202	1,143	57	2	434	417	16	1	66	59	7	0	368	359	9	1
					11.3	11.5	8.6	4.0	19.5	18.3	33.3	0	10.5	10.9	5.5	4.8
PERSONAL/FAMILY (1,000)	1,580	1,490	73	17	335	326	6	1	35	33	1	0	300	294	5	1
					8.7	8.9	3.2	4.0	10.3	10.2	4.8	0	8.6	8.9	3.0	4.8
SOCIAL RECREATIONAL (1,000)	1,552	1,500	35	17	371	357	10	3	33	32	0	1	338	325	10	2
					9.7	9.8	5.4	12.0	9.7	9.9	0	25.0	9.7	9.8	6.0	9.5
OTHER (1,000)	510	455	51	4	147	142	1	3	14	14	0	0	133	128	3	3
					3.8	3.9	1.6	12.0	4.1	4.1	0	0	3.8	3.9	1.8	14.2
NO REPORT (1,000)	62	55	7	0	10	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	9	1	0
					0.3	0.2			0	0	0	0	0.3	0.2	0.6	0

Source: Based on Okes. *Participation in Adult Education.* (1969)

SOME QUESTIONS OF PURPOSE

Analysts of rural adult education today are aware of a fundamental difference in belief about the proper purpose of adult education. At one end of the continuum is the view that the purpose should be assimilation, that is, making the rural p[illegible]le fully viable in the larger society, with skills and knowledge equivalent to those of their urban counterparts. On the other side is the view of those who see the trend toward assimilation as a form of colonialism which will, at a minimum, destroy precious elements of folk culture.

To a great extent, these are differences of orientation and interpretation rather than of fact. For example, Taylor and Jones (1964), in their analysis of life in rural America, refer to adult education as a primary force in agriculture and in the whole of American rural and small town life. They view adult education in rural areas as being in the interest of integration of society rather than of service to the interests of rural people as such. They stated that the historical development of land-grant schools was due less to requests of rural people than to the work of national leaders who implicitly supported an urbanized way of life. "(Their presence) is inconsistent with ruralized social organization....These programs and their personnel are the connecting links which integrate the enterprises of agriculture and urbanization into a common whole, namely, the dynamic American Society" (p.396). In short, Taylor and Jones saw the process as essentially beneficial to the nation as a whole and to the rural population.

Sher and his associates (1977) would seem to concur in their contention that adult education -- and all education -- in rural America has been motivated less by a desire to serve the indigenous needs of rural people than by an urbanizing intent. Rather than seeing this as a positive and integrating factor in society, however, they view it as wrong and, ultimately, ineffective. For example:

> Having spent incalculable amounts of time and money on bribing, bullying and coercing rural communities into accepting reforms they never sought or desired -- only to discover that the long-range benefits of their efforts were marginal -- leading educators and policymakers essentially wrote off rural school reform as wrote off rural school reform as a bad investment. (p.289)

This is an important and potentially divisive issue which deserves more than polemics and unexamined assumptions. These questions should be considered: *What purpose or mixture of purposes are being served and how well? Which should be served? Who should decide and how?*

SOME EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

In examining the needs of the rural poor, the National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty (Bishop et al., 1967) recommended that particular attention be given to the basic educational structure in order that the incidence of functional illiteracy be reduced. Beyond that, they also expressed particular concern for what they called the "boxed-in" farm families, that is, those for whom farming no longer represented a viable livelihood but who lacked the basic skills needed to succeed in other areas. Their emphasis was twofold: making viable those who had a future in the rural area and making mobile those who did not.

Specifically, the National Advisory Committee recommended the following points: the establishment of literacy and general education for adults; intensive management consultation with young farmers to assist them in developing economically viable farm operations and in making decisions about whether or not to remain in farming; intensive homemaking programs with poor families; and expanded out-of-school programs for youth.

Other needs were highlighted, although they may not have presented the dramatic challenge of literacy programs or the intransigence of occupational viability. Recommendations regarding community development and effective use of

community resources were also important, as were recommendations regarding provisions of education to an increasingly diversified and technical agribusiness industry.

Beyond these, there is -- in rural as in urban areas -- a continuing need for education in the arts and crafts and general cultural areas.

"GED" AND "ABE" PROGRAMS

The dominance of General Education Diploma (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in the literature on rural adult education no doubt stems from the concern with rural proverty that has been present throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s. This concern resulted in sizeable spending on research and demonstration projects and their subsequent reports and evaluations.

Probably the best known and best documented effort of that period was the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center. This thirteen-state program was headquartered at Morehead State University, Kentucky, and was aimed at an audience of rural isolated mountain people (ABE, 1970; Analysis of Seven Special Projects, 1969; The Appalachia News, 1970; A Cumulative AAEC Bibliography, 1973; DDR Project Final Report, 1970; DDR Project OSU Module, 1971).

Another attempt to regionalize programs in Adult Basic Education was the Communi-Link Project of Colorado State University (Second Year Report, 1972; Terminal Report, 1973). Other important approaches included the Wisconsin Project RFD (Amanna, 1973; RFD--The First Year, 1971; Second Year Report, 1971; Project RFD, 1971; Final Report, 1972). A number of smaller scale efforts also were conducted (Aker, 1968; Arkansas Final Program Report, 1976; Kentucky Final Report, 1971).

These programs generated a great deal of activity. Basically they tried out a number of innovative approaches, ranging from the use of specially prepared learning packets (including cassette tapes and specially targeted newspapers) to the use of mature college students and indigenous paraprofessionals in person-to-person teaching.

It is typical of these efforts that almost everything tried worked, at least to some degree, for the designer. On the other hand, almost nothing "worked" in the sense of initiating a national comprehensive program which built systematically on its own experience and which showed continuity as well as direction. Part of the explanation probably lies in the nature of the enterprises themselves. Most were conceived as research or demonstration efforts. In nearly every case, the intent was that demonstrated success would inform later efforts and that successful programs would be adopted by appropriate local groups. Instead, each new researcher had his or her own theory to test or solution to demonstrate; each locality had an existing educational system in which it had invested and which was competitive for resources and public support. Even where there was the will to install or replicate programs, the talents and commitment of the originators often have proven to have been unique.

In general, the results tended to show that comprehensive programs are needed which give attention to recruitment, diagnosis, counseling, placement, communication within the community, and the teaching of basic skills. For maximum efficiency, such programs cannot operate in isolation. This suggests that they be coordinated on a regional or national basis. At the same time, such programs must belong to the community if they are to gain the commitment needed to sustain them and if they are to bring true integration into the community structure. The conflict between these needs continues to provide a challenge.

OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

As in the case of GED programs, national concern for the elimination of poverty has resulted in a number of programs aimed at making rural people occupationally viable. In fact, that has been the aim of many GED programs. Greater employment has been the linchpin of many general community development programs.

In a study of workers in New York agribusiness, Mendoza and Bruce (1970) found that the occupants of only fourteen of the seventy-one job titles covered in the study had had

any vocational or technical preparation for their work. Fewer than one-tenth of those surveyed saw any need for further training. The authors attributed this to lack of experience with training and to lack of incentives or challenges in employment. Nevertheless, they projected some need for continuing education and inservice training, particularly for those serving the increasingly mechanized agricultural and agribusiness sector.

The approaches which have been reported tend to be pilot efforts. The Mountain Plains Education and Economic Development Program enrolled whole families in a residential program in which work experience and job placement were coupled with family management skills. The conclusion was that putting individuals into an artificial environment, working with them there, and then returning them to their unchanged home environment virtually assures failure (Conrad, 1974; Stromsdorfer and Moayed-Dadkhah, 1976).

In a program conducted at Tuskegee Institute, male heads of households were trained in vocational skills and provided with counseling and follow-up services. About half were resident on campus while the rest commuted. The placement rate indicated success, but a problem was noted in recruiting hard-core unemployed. This suggested that the participants may not have been atypical of the whole population (Tuskegee Institute, 1965; Final Report, 1968; Johnson, 1967).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

One approach to the problems of rural poverty has been overall community development. An example is the Concerted Services in Training and Education (CSTE) project carried out in Arkansas, Minnesota, and New Mexico. CSTE attempted to stimulate development through coordinating services and programs at local and national levels. On-site evaluations found that some expansion of local industry occurred, but the overall increase in local employment was not great. A need to attract wider participation of low income people in the program was noted (Greissman, 1969).

In partial contrast, the five year program at Dona Elena, Puerto Rico (Roberts, 1963) used a combination of improved

nutrition, education, housing, and public facilities. Community attitudes toward self-help were reported to have been raised considerably.

A less employment-oriented approach was the Fort Gay, West Virginia School-Community Project which used a school-based FM radio station and a community newsletter to supplement a career education program, a community center, and other activities (Bertram et al., 1976; Bertram, 1977). This is similar in some respects to the school-based community development corporations proposed by Sher (1977), who envisioned them (i.e., the corporations) as owning and operating businesses, thereby providing employment as well as services.

Zeller and Miller (1968) identified three conditions for successful community action programs: adequate leadership at the local level; sympathetic or neutral attitudes on the part of "power holders" at the community, county, and local levels; and involvement of the target population. The researchers concluded that those conditions were not present in the programs they evaluated in West Virginia. Hence, they recommended initial concentration on the development of local leadership. The feasibility of that objective also has been demonstrated by Dawson (1976) in his report of a leadership development program in Lawrence County, Alabama. The issue of involvement is not a simple one to deal with, as indicated by Bruce (1979).

Sher (1977) took note of the fact that the rural component of the population, even using the most stringently conservative definition of the term "rural," is in excess of 35 million people. Nevertheless, he saw outmigration -- specifically "involuntary" outmigration -- as a major problem, one symptomatic of a lack of viable opportunity in the rural area. He attributed the failure of rural development efforts (including education) to external control, a belief in a need for integration, and piecemeal approaches.

ADDITIONAL AREAS

As responses to a concern for rural poverty, vocational training and adult basic education have received a great deal of attention. They have been the subjects of

numerous programs. As a result, reports of these efforts tend to be plentiful. They are not, however, the only things going on. Cooperative Extension, cooperatives, and the private sector continue to provide educational and advisory programming in agriculture, homemaking, and community development. Hospitals and public health agencies carry on programs in these areas as well. Libraries and museums continue to provide work in the arts and literature as well as other areas. Community action and social services agencies also are active in this field.

One significant sector of adult education often overlooked is that provided by community organizations, especially churches. Kay (1974) indicated that 26,780 community organizations in the United States were providing adult education programs outside standard metropolitan areas. Churches and other religious organizations accounted for more than 85 percent of this number. It was reported that adult participants totalled 2.4 million, of whom almost two-thirds took part in church-sponsored programs; approximately one-fifth took part in programs sponsored by the YMCAs, YWCAs, and the Red Cross; 8 percent participated in social service programs.

SOME PROBLEMS OF DELIVERY

In order to be effective, educational programs must reach those they are intended to serve. Reaching the remote areas of rural America is complicated by the distances involved and by low population density. People obviously must travel farther in order to be physically present at educational events. Even then, the numbers may be small. Travel means increased cost of participation to the learner. This may mean still lower participation. It also means that both the total cost and per-learner cost of program delivery is increased.

The direct cost factors have a cumulative effect in that they generally result in restricted educational program offerings and reductions in other amenities affected by cost problems. This, in turn, may reduce the attractiveness

of the rural area to the very teachers and leaders needed to make programs successful.

Halfvarson and O'Connor (1970), in a survey of adult music education, noted that while the interest and physical facilities were present, many small communities lacked qualified leadership. Adults wishing to continue their music education are required to go to urban centers, hence, further depriving the small communities of leadership talent.

Among the causes of inferior education in rural areas cited by the National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty was the difficulty of getting and keeping good teachers (Bishop, 1967). In support of this point, the committee noted the generally lower salaries and the generally lower academic credentials of the teachers. Similarly, education facilities were judged to be less satisfactory than those in urban areas. This was based, in part, on the absence of specialized science and language-teaching facilities in the rural areas.

There can be little dispute as to the basic facts. Because of low population density, rural areas suffer problems. Even where the investment per person is relatively high, the smaller number of persons may still yield a total too low to command higher priced facilities.

In situations where face-to-face contact is deemed necessary, the problem of program delivery typically has been dealt with in one of three ways. In some instances the classroom simply has been moved into the community, sometimes literally by putting it on wheels. In other cases, sufficient numbers of learners have been assembled through travel or residential arrangements. In other cases, the influence and effectiveness of scarce professionals have been multiplied through the use of paraprofessionals (paid or volunteer) or through the training of indigenous leaders.

Where face-to-face contact is not essential, the mail, telephones, and mass media have been used. Books, service letters, and cassette tapes move by mail or through user networks. Existing media are utilized in a variety of ways, and dedicated media -- newspapers, radio stations, TV cable systems or channels -- are created.

All of these approaches can work. Indeed, they have been demonstrated to work -- for particular purposes at particular times. Each approach has its particular strengths, for example, low cost, impact, audience capacity, fit to subject matter, and the like. But each also imposes its own limitations; each requires its own compromises. There are no magic solutions. The problems can only be minimized through imaginative exploitation of resources and through careful selection of compromises.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of years ago, Landis, in an introduction to a text, wrote, "At first it was expected that a thorough survey could be undertaken, but there was such a scarcity of pertinent data and such a lack of uniformity in statistical information that an exhaustive survey was out of the question. Therefore, the most that could be attempted was an interpretation of a variety of projects" (Landis and Willard, 1933, p. ix).

Writing at the beginning of the depression, Landis and Willard found that while there had been significant efforts and accomplishments in a number of areas, there was no coherent movement of rural adult education in the United States. They identified "few spontaneous local developments...no folk developments with their roots deep in the soil, such as have taken place in some other countries" (Landis and Willard, 1933, p. 184).

Moreover, Landis and Willard viewed the main problems as involving the development of adequate financial resources, providing library services, developing trained leaders, encouraging experimentation, improving contacts between rural and urban educators, increasing and improving research, and creating better organizational structure. They went on to call for a system in which adult education in rural communities was integrated within inself and with other forms of education in both rural and urban areas.

This brief examination of the recent literature reveals that little has changed since then. The overwhelming

impression is that of fragmentation, a lack of communication across efforts, and a lack of continuity in time.

There does not even appear to be adequate information on the nature and scope of the enterprise in the rural area. None of the state surveys reviewed distinguished rural from urban participants of individual communities or counties. Few of the surveys took into account, in any systematic way, learner-initiated individual study or informal learning networks among individuals.

Perhaps because both the literature and the data contained in it tend to be generated by institutionalized programs, one gains the impression of a lack of spontaneous local developments and of the imposition of programs from outside. Whether or not true indigenous efforts exist and only remain to be discovered, it is clear that few of the programs described in the literature have tried seriously to discover and work within local folk traditions of communication, education, or even local perceptions of the problems involved. This latter charge, incidentally, can be levelled as validly against those who argue for preserving the culture as against those who would change it.

There is another reason to bring the people themselves more directly into program development. The nature of bureaucracies and their reward systems are such that no single agency can be counted upon to subordinate itself to another -- even in the interest of efficiency. Comprehensive programming can maximize efficiency and, thus, partially overcome the cost-of-delivery problem and yield better programs. However, it is not likely to be achieved unless the agencies to be coordinated are subject to the kind of expectations-plus-support that can only come from active and powerful citizen participation.

RESEARCH NEEDS

Several research needs are apparent. The first and most obvious is for a better inventory of current participation. In order to overcome the institutional bias present in most current studies, this inventory should start from the

population itself and look at the educational behavior of individual rural adults. From this, some sense of the "educational ecology" of the rural community could be gained. This should probably take into account the individual demographic and occupational characteristics of the populations studied as well.

A second need is for generalizations about what works and under what conditions. Because individual efforts vary greatly by purpose, audience, subject content, and the like, this effort calls for a method and language of analysis which will permit generalizations. If this can be accomplished, systematic use can be made of past experience. Until that is done, the best that can be hoped for is inspired creation and thoughtful trial and error.

Efforts, of course, should be made continually to apply, exploit, and extend the use of communication and educational technology to overcome the difficulties endemic to the system. There is a particular need, for example, for methods appropriate to people with limited literacy.

Much more effort needs to be expended on maximizing the resources already present. This involves finding ways of coordinating efforts among programs and of making effective use of existing educational channels. It also means identifying and incorporating indigenous resources, channels, and methods.

Lastly, it should be noted that effective programs for adults depend, in the end, on acceptance by them. It also should be noted that the ideals of a democracy suggest the importance of responding to the needs of the people as they identify such needs. This demands that effective ways be found to incorporate those needs into programs and to do so in such a way that the programs truly belong to the people they serve.

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